

The University of Chicago

THE ONLY CHILD IN THE FAMILY
A COMPARISON WITH OTHER ORDERS OF BIRTH

A PART OF A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF THE DIVISION OF THE
SOCIAL SCIENCES IN CANDIDACY FOR
THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

1937

By
WILLIAM PAUL CARTER

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES	Page 111
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS: STATISTICAL DATA	6
III. PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS: LIFE HISTORY DATA	21
IV. SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND UNADJUSTMENT	29
V. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS	43
APPENDIXES	
I. STATISTICAL SCHEDULE	255
II. OUTLINE FOR WRITING LIFE HISTORY	261

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. Extent of Indulgence by the Mother	7
2. Extent of Indulgence by the Father	8
3. Extent Everything Planned or Done for the Child . . .	10
4. Extent Restricted from Play by Mother during Childhood	11
5. Amount of Attention Given the Child by Mother	12
6. Amount of Attention Given the Child by Father	13
7. Anxiety of Mother for Child's Welfare and Safety . . .	14
8. Anxiety of Father for Child's Welfare and Safety . . .	15
9. Extent of Mother's Love for the Child	16
10. Extent of Father's Love for the Child	17
11. Comparisons of All Four Orders of Birth	18
12. Comparisons of Only and Middle Children	18
13. Extent of Indulgence by Mother (Life History Data) . .	22
14. Extent of Indulgence by Father (Life History Data) . .	22
15. Anxiety for the Child's Welfare and Safety (Life His- tory Data)	23
16. Amount of Attention Given the Child (Life History Data)	25
17. Extent of the Parents' Love for the Child (Life His- tory Data)	26
18. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjust- ment: Boys; Grade School Period	31
19. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjust- ment: Girls; Grade School Period	32
20. Degree of Social Adjustment or Unadjustment: Grade School Period (Life History Data)	33
21. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjust- ment: Boys; High School Period	34
22. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjust- ment: Girls; High School Period	35

Table	Page
23. Degree of Social Adjustment or Unadjustment: High School Period (Life History Data)	36
24. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjustment: Boys; College Period	38
25. Order of Birth and Certain Indices of Social Adjustment: Girls; College Period	39
26. Degree of Social Adjustment or Unadjustment: College Period (Life History Data)	40



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The subject of this dissertation is a study of the only child in comparison with middle, oldest, and youngest children in the family. A survey of the popular literature and current theories, particularly of certain psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, revealed a consensus of opinion that the majority of only children, as compared with other orders of birth, live in an abnormal home environment, have many unfavorable personality traits, present many behavior problems, and are likely to be greatly unadjusted throughout childhood and later life. Great emphasis was placed upon the theory, particularly by psychoanalysts and psychiatrists, that parents usually concentrated an exaggerated amount of love, protection, and attention upon only children, and that these parents were prone greatly to indulge, "spoil" or "pamper" them; and in their exaggerated solicitude for their welfare, greatly to restrict them from normal association with other children of their own age. The effects of this typical parental treatment and of the peculiar home situation of the only child are, according to current theory, to cause the great majority of them to be either extremely egocentric, selfish, tyrannical, domineering, anti-social, and unpopular with others, or extremely withdrawn, sensitive, emotionally unstable, dependent types; and frequently to be greatly isolated and socially unadjusted throughout life. None of these writers, however, presented any data to prove their theories.

In surveying actual studies of only children, two early

investigators, Bohannon and Brill, substantiated, in separate studies, many of the same conclusions and theories found in the above mentioned literature. Neither investigator, however, used any control groups, and both researches seemed to be biased toward a selection of abnormal cases. A comparatively large number of recent studies, with control groups, were made of only children in various types of clinics, of delinquent only children, of school children, and of college students. Some disagreement was found in clinical studies, but there were as many investigators who found that only children were "somewhat superior" or "no different," as those who found them "inferior" to other children in regard to certain character traits, emotional stability, egocentrism, delinquencies, and social adjustment. In nearly all studies of delinquent children, the investigators found no higher proportion of only children among delinquents than among non-delinquents.

Most studies of school children revealed either no significant differences between only children and others, or only children to be somewhat "superior" in many characteristics to other birth orders. The favorable findings on only children mentioned four to eight times in order of frequency were: more honest, more courteous, more obedient, more emotionally stable, less nervous, above average in physical development and health, "normal" in social adjustment, "normal" in play activities, more self-controlled, and fewer behavior problems and school difficulties. A number of other school studies revealed no significant differences in truthfulness, selfishness, aggressiveness, obedience, co-operation, type of mood, emotional stability, leadership, I. Q., sociability, popularity, health, school success, and behavior problems. In the studies of college students no significant differences were found between only children and others on nearly all tests in re-

gard to emotional stability, neurotic tendencies, physical development, health, scholarship, and in several personality traits.

When all four types of the more recent studies are taken as a whole, none of the unfavorable findings and conclusions of the earlier studies of Brill and Bohannon, or of current theory, are verified. Only children were found to compare favorably with other children particularly on many personality traits, school success, health, and emotional stability. Little data were found, however, on parent-child relations, extent of isolation from other children, and social adjustment, which are the main subjects of investigation in the present project.

Another survey was made of studies which threw light upon the proportion of only children to other children. Although the greatest extremes ranged between approximately 6 per cent and 28 per cent, the percentages of only children in most studies fell within the narrower range of 9 to 17 per cent, with a general average of about 13 per cent. The proportion of only children was found to vary considerably with different age groups, different types of communities, different socio-economic levels, different occupational classes, and different races and nationalities. The proportion of only children among elementary school children most frequently ranged from 14 to 18 per cent, among junior high school students, about 12 per cent, and among college students about 16 per cent. Rural areas were found to contain much smaller proportions of only children than urban areas, and somewhat smaller than small city communities. Immigrant areas usually revealed much lower percentages than native urban white areas, and urban Negroes revealed somewhat higher proportions of only children than any other group in one study.

Data on different socio-economic levels indicate that

the poor class contains a considerably smaller proportion of only children than do the upper middle class or the wealthy class, and a somewhat lower proportion than the lower middle class. Differences in average sizes of families among different occupational classes indicate that the professional, proprietary, and clerical classes may contain considerably larger proportions of only children than do unskilled workers and various types of farm groups. The census data revealed no significant increase in the proportion of one-child families in the general population since 1900. Some decrease in the size of urban families, especially in the professional, clerical, and proprietary classes between 1900 and 1930, however, indicates some increase in the proportion of only children in these urban classes.

The main hypotheses tested by the present study are: (1) That the parental treatment accorded only children is nearly always very different from that accorded children with brothers and sisters; (2) That, in the great majority of cases, the only child is greatly indulged, and given an exaggerated amount of attention, love, and protection by his parents; and, (3) That because of these abnormal parental attitudes and the peculiar situation of the only child in the family, he is much more likely to become greatly isolated and greatly unadjusted than are other children.

In order to test these hypotheses, 4,064 completed schedules were secured from college students in 50 colleges and universities in 29 states representing different sections of the United States, and 316 life histories were secured from 13 of the same colleges and universities distributed fairly evenly in the different sections of the country. After each question in the schedule five squares were provided in which the student could check either "a very great deal," "a good deal," "some or average,"

"little," or "very little or none." After elimination of all extraneous factors, such as differences in race, broken homes, family discord, etc., a total of 563 only children, including 365 females and 198 males, remained in the larger statistical study. The same number of each of the middle, oldest, and youngest children, and the same proportions of the sexes, as of only children, were selected at random. Only the middle children were used as a control group in the life history study. After elimination of extraneous factors, 68 life histories of only, and 95 life histories of middle children remained. All the subjects retained in both types of data were native born Americans of the white race, nearly all of native American parentage, and were drawn fairly evenly from different types of communities, and chiefly from the upper and lower middle classes. They were all of a uniform age group, ranging from 17 to 25 years. The only children were defined as those who had never had any living brothers or sisters, and who had been reared without any other children living in the family. In order to measure the differences between the different orders of birth, the contingency method, or that of making contingency tables and computing coefficients of contingency, was employed for the statistical data. The life histories were also summarized statistically on many of the same indices as were employed in the larger statistical study, so as to check many of the same points in both types of data.

CHAPTER II

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS: STATISTICAL DATA

Although a good deal has been written about the parental treatment of the only child and of his position in the home, very few actual studies have been made on parent-child relations. Such questions as the extent to which only children are restricted from play, the degree of anxiety for their safety and welfare, the amount of attention given them, and the extent to which they are indulged by their parents, as compared with children in other positions in the family, have never been studied for a large number of cases. Neither have there been any adequate comparative studies of different orders of birth on the extent of parental love given the child, the extent of demonstration of affection, the degree of doing or planning things for the child, the amount of pressure placed on the child to fulfill parental ambitions, or the extent to which the child rebelled against parental restrictions. A study of these types of parental treatment and parent-child relations will be the main aims of the present chapter.¹

The degree to which only children are indulged by the mother as compared with other orders of birth is presented in Table 1. The contingency coefficient (C) of .177 does not indicate a great deal of difference among all four groups in indulgence of the boys by the mother. The difference is somewhat sig-

¹Only the most significant tables will be presented in this chapter. Summary tables will be presented at the end of the chapter, however, giving the coefficients of contingency for all of the comparisons made on parent-child relations in the statistical study.

nificant, however. The percentages reveal that the only children among the boys were indulged only slightly more than were the oldest and youngest, but the difference between only and middle children was somewhat greater. The coefficient of contingency was calculated for the only and middle children separately in several tables. The C for indulgence of the middle and only males taken separately was .200, which indicated a slightly greater difference than among all four groups.

TABLE 1
EXTENT OF INDULGENCE BY THE MOTHER

	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Boys				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
Very great deal	10.6	8.6	9.6	5.0
Good deal	26.3	18.2	14.2	16.2
Average	33.3	35.3	30.8	32.3
Little	21.2	29.3	33.8	30.3
Very little or none	8.6	8.6	11.6	16.2
C* for Boys .177				
Girls				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
Very great deal	13.4	7.4	9.1	5.5
Good deal	26.8	16.7	22.2	14.8
Average	32.1	36.2	31.2	31.8
Little	18.4	25.2	24.7	31.8
Very little or none	9.3	14.5	12.8	16.1
C for Girls .185				

*Coefficient of contingency.

The amount of indulgence of the girls by the mother shows substantially the same differences as among the boys. The C of .185 is only slightly higher for all four groups but the differences are somewhat more significant. The percentages reveal the only girls to be the most indulged, the youngest slightly less indulged, the oldest next, and the middle girls the least indulged by the mother. The C for the only and middle girls alone is .241,

which signifies a considerable difference. The percentages also give evidence of a good deal more indulgence of the only girls than of the middle girls by the mother.

The next table indicates sugstantially the same differences in indulgence by the father as by the mother.

TABLE 2
EXTENT OF INDULGENCE BY THE FATHER

	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Boys				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
Very great deal	8.6	5.1	6.0	5.6
Good deal	24.7	17.7	17.7	10.6
Average	30.3	31.3	30.8	31.3
Little	25.8	31.3	29.3	33.3
Very little or none	10.6	14.6	16.2	19.2
C for Boys .158				
Girls				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
Very great deal	14.5	10.7	12.6	9.6
Good deal	29.6	20.6	18.9	15.3
Average	32.6	33.4	31.8	30.7
Little	14.0	19.7	24.9	28.8
Very little or none	9.3	15.6	11.8	15.6
C for Girls .185				

The C of .158 for the father's indulgence of the boys gives evidence of a slightly smaller difference among the four orders of birth than was true of the mother's indulgence of the boys. The same C, .185, is revealed in the indulgence of the girls by both the father and the mother. In the father's indulgence of the boys the difference is not significant; but the difference is quite significant in the father's indulgence of the girls. Here again, in extent of indulgence by the father of both boys and girls the percentages point to the conclusion that the greatest differences are between the only and middle children, with those in the oldest and youngest positions falling in between

and differing little from the only children. This conclusion is given further support by the somewhat higher C of .216 for the boys, and of .241 for the girls, when the coefficients were calculated for the middle and only children separately.

Although considerable differences are shown between only and middle children in the extent of indulgence of both sexes by both father and mother in the two foregoing tables it should be remembered that these differences apply only to a small percentage of each group, while the overlapping, or number of only and of middle children scoring the same amount of indulgence is quite large. For example, only a small percentage more of only than of middle children of both sexes checked themselves as indulged "a very great deal" and "a good deal," while percentages checking indulged "average" were almost the same, running between 30 and 35 per cent for both only and middle children. Furthermore, a considerable percentage of only children, as well as middle children, checked themselves as indulged "little," or "very little or none" in both tables. Thus the popular notion that nearly all only children are indulged by their parents is not borne out by the present statistical data. Neither do the foregoing tables bear out Bohannon's conclusion that as high as 71.8 per cent of only children are "excessively indulged." Furthermore, the data presented do not conform to the popular expectation of very great differences in indulgence between only children and other children.

Table 3 shows the degree to which the parents planned or "did everything" for the children instead of teaching them to solve their own problems or to take care of themselves. This table portrays considerable difference in the parental tendency to do or plan things for the different groups of children. The

contingency coefficient of .215 for the boys supports the evidence shown by the difference in percentages. The difference is also quite significant. The differences in percentages among the boys are revealed to be small, however, between the only and oldest, and between the only and youngest children. The greatest difference is seen between only and middle children, as the considerably higher percentages for only children in the "very great deal" and "good deal" categories show. The C of .262, calculated for these two orders of birth alone, indicates the same finding.

TABLE 3

EXTENT EVERYTHING PLANNED OR DONE FOR THE CHILD

	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Boys				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
Very great deal	10.1	11.6	10.6	2.5
Good deal	30.8	27.3	21.2	18.7
Average	35.9	34.3	36.4	36.4
Little	19.7	20.2	19.7	29.8
Very little or none	3.5	6.6	12.1	12.6
C for Boys .215				
Girls				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
Very great deal	30.1	22.2	18.1	11.8
Good deal	29.3	23.8	23.8	17.8
Average	27.4	29.9	31.0	37.0
Little	11.0	16.2	19.2	22.2
Very little or none	2.2	7.9	7.9	11.2
C for Girls .232				

Among the girls there is a still greater difference in the parental tendency to help the various groups. The C of .232 for all four groups and the still higher C of .316 computed for middle and only children separately, as well as the considerably higher percentages for only girls in the categories above "average," all indicate a good deal of difference, especially between the only and middle groups. According to the percentages, how-

ever, the difference is small between the only and oldest girls, and not much greater between only and youngest girls. The middle children of both sexes were allowed to be the most self-sufficient of all groups.

Table 4 reveals the extent to which the mother restricted the child from play with other children during childhood.

TABLE 4
EXTENT RESTRICTED FROM PLAY BY MOTHER DURING CHILDHOOD

	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Boys				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
Very great deal	3.5	2.0	3.0	2.0
Good deal	11.1	8.1	11.1	7.6
Average	29.3	32.3	27.3	23.2
Little	28.8	29.3	26.3	33.3
Very little or none	27.3	28.3	32.3	33.9
C for Boys .114				
Girls				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
Very great deal	2.7	3.0	1.4	2.5
Good deal	9.9	4.9	4.9	6.0
Average	20.6	21.4	20.3	20.8
Little	30.4	25.2	30.4	28.0
Very little or none	36.4	45.5	43.0	42.7
C for Girls .110				

Here again the low contingency coefficients of .114 for the boys and .110 for the girls, as well as the slight differences in percentages in most categories, for both sexes, reveal little difference in the amount of restriction from play by the mother in any of the four classes compared. The middle boys were slightly less restricted than only, oldest, or youngest boys; whereas the youngest girls were slightly less restricted than middle, oldest, or only girls. The percentages are surprisingly close between all four groups for both sexes in most categories. No significant differences were discovered either for boys or girls.

One question asked in the schedule was, "How much attention were you given as a child by your mother?" Table 5 gives the results.

TABLE 5
AMOUNT OF ATTENTION GIVEN THE CHILD BY MOTHER

	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Boys				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
Very great deal	55.0	40.9	38.9	39.4
Good deal	36.9	39.4	39.4	31.3
Average	6.6	17.7	18.7	23.7
Little	1.0	2.0	3.0	5.6
Very little or none	.5	....	....	....
C for Boys .220				
Girls				
	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
Very great deal	66.8	47.1	40.3	33.2
Good deal	24.4	34.8	35.3	32.9
Average	7.7	15.6	21.1	29.0
Little	.8	1.9	3.0	3.8
Very little or none	.3	.6	.3	1.1
C for Girls .273				

A good deal of difference is shown for both sexes among all four groups in the amount of attention given by the mother. The contingency coefficient of .220 is fairly high for the boys, but that of .273 for the girls is considerably higher than are most of the coefficients found in the present study. A still greater difference was found between only and middle children when compared alone, the C being .276 for boys and .347 for girls.

In the tables presented thus far, greater differences were usually found between only children and middle children than between only and oldest or youngest children, the latter differences often being quite small or almost negligible. Consequently it was thought best to eliminate the oldest and youngest groups and to compare only the middle and only children on the remaining

questions in regard to parent-child relations. Therefore, the rest of the tables presented in this chapter will be comparisons of middle and only children alone.

The amount of attention given only and middle children by their fathers is brought out in Table 6.

TABLE 6
AMOUNT OF ATTENTION GIVEN THE CHILD BY FATHER

	Boys		Girls	
	No. in Each Group 198		No. in Each Group 365	
	Only %	Middle %	Only %	Middle %
Very great deal	25.8	13.1	45.2	22.7
Good deal	38.9	34.9	32.6	34.8
Average	28.8	36.4	17.2	31.0
Little	5.0	13.6	3.6	7.7
Very little or none	1.5	2.0	1.4	3.8
	C for Boys .210		C for Girls .256	

The amount of attention given the only children by their fathers is shown to be considerably greater than that given by fathers of middle children. This finding is true for both boys and girls. The difference is quite significant for the boys and very significant for the girls. It is significant, however, that the amount of attention given by the father is a great deal less than that given by the mother for all orders of birth of both sexes. The mother gave a good deal more attention even to the middle boys than the father gave to the only boys. Table 6 shows that the father gave the girls considerably more attention than the boys and that this sex factor was almost as important as order of birth on this question. For example, the father gave the only girls a good deal more attention than the only boys, and the middle girls almost as much attention as the only boys.

Another question in the schedule, designed to measure the protective attitude of the parent and the extent of shielding the

child from dangers of various kinds, was, "To what degree was your mother anxious for your welfare and safety?" Table 7 gives the distribution of answers to this question.

TABLE 7
ANXIETY OF MOTHER FOR CHILD'S WELFARE AND SAFETY

	Boys No. in Each Group 198		Girls No. in Each Group 365	
	Only %	Middle %	Only %	Middle %
Very great deal	69.2	56.1	73.7	56.7
Good deal	22.2	32.8	21.0	25.5
Average	8.1	8.6	4.9	15.6
Little	.5	2.0	.3	1.9
Very little or none	....	.5	....	.3
	C for Boys .154		C for Girls .215	

Although the mother's anxiety for the welfare and safety of the only boys is 13 per cent greater than for the middle boys in the "very great deal" classification, the middle boys scored over 10 per cent higher in the "good deal" column, and almost the same percentage in the "average" category, as did the only boys. Therefore, the difference between the two groups of boys was not very great, as indicated also by the low C of .154. The difference is not significant.

The difference of 17 per cent more for the only children than for the middle children in the "very great deal" column, among the girls, and the larger percentage of middle girls checking only "average" anxiety by the mother, exhibits a greater difference between the girls than between the boys. The higher C of .215 for the girls gives further evidence for the same conclusion. The difference is very significant for the girls. It is interesting to note, however, that for both sexes the mother expresses a high degree of anxiety for the middle group, as well as for the only group, as attested by the high percentages in the "very

great deal" category and the very low percentages in those below the "good deal" classification. Thus there is much overlapping in the percentages between both orders of birth, and the differences apply only to a small proportion of the children.

The degree of the father's anxiety for the child's welfare and safety is summarized in the next table.

TABLE 8
ANXIETY OF FATHER FOR CHILD'S WELFARE AND SAFETY

	Boys		Girls	
	No. in Each Group	198	No. in Each Group	365
	Only %	Middle %	Only %	Middle %
Very great deal	49.0	36.4	57.3	45.5
Good deal	30.3	35.9	26.3	27.1
Average	17.2	20.7	12.3	21.4
Little	2.5	5.5	3.3	4.9
Very little or none	1.0	1.5	.8	1.1
	C for Boys .138		C for Girls .143	

The low coefficients of .138 for the boys, and .143 for the girls, as well as the relatively small differences in percentages in most categories, point to a small amount of difference between the only and middle children of both sexes in regard to anxiety of the father for their safety and welfare. The difference is not significant for the boys, but it is somewhat significant for the girls.

If the table for anxiety of the mother is compared with that on the anxiety of the father, an interesting contrast may be observed. The mother shows a much greater concern for the children of both sexes and both orders of birth, than does the father. The mother expresses more anxiety even for the middle boys than does the father for the only boys, and practically the same amount for the middle girls as the father expresses for the only girls. In other words, the father is no more concerned about the welfare

and safety of the only children than the mother is about that of the middle children.

The schedule also included the question, "How much do you think your mother loved you as a child?" The following table is a summary of the answers to this question.

TABLE 9
EXTENT OF MOTHER'S LOVE FOR THE CHILD

	Boys		Girls	
	No. in Each Group 198		No. in Each Group 365	
	Only %	Middle %	Only %	Middle %
Very great deal	84.9	69.7	93.1	75.6
Good deal	13.6	20.7	5.2	16.2
Average	1.5	9.1	1.4	7.4
Little	....	.5	.3	.5
Very little or none	....	....	....	.3
	C for Boys .206		C for Girls .237	

This table gives evidence of a good deal of difference between the only and middle groups in the extent of the mother's love for both sexes, although greater difference may be perceived between the girls than between the boys. The differences are clearly significant for the boys and very significant for the girls.

Table 10 presents the degree of the father's love for the only child as compared with the intermediate child. Apparently the father's love is not much greater for the only child than for the intermediate child. This is true for both sexes, since the C's of .163 for boys and .145 for girls are low, and there is a good deal of overlapping of percentages in most categories. Although the difference is not significant for the boys, it is somewhat significant for the girls.

TABLE 10

EXTENT OF FATHER'S LOVE FOR THE CHILD

	Boys		Girls	
	No. in Each Group 198		No. in Each Group 365	
	Only %	Middle %	Only %	Middle %
Very great deal	60.6	48.0	75.9	64.4
Good deal	27.3	29.8	18.3	22.5
Average	10.1	18.7	3.6	7.9
Little	1.5	3.5	1.4	3.8
Very little or none	.5	....	.8	1.4
	C for Boys .163		C for Girls .145	

Summary and Conclusions on Parent-Child Relations

On some types of parent-child relations the statistical data showed considerable differences between the different orders of birth, while in others the differences were small. The tables comparing all four groups of only, oldest, youngest, and middle children will be summarized first. In Table 11 parent-child relations are grouped, first, according to those in which the differences are considerable and statistically significant, and second, those in which the differences are small and not significant. The coefficients of contingency indicate the degree of difference on each comparison.

Table 12 summarizes those parent-child relations in which only the middle and only children were compared. A comparison of these two summary tables brings out the fact that the differences, as indicated by the coefficients of contingency, are somewhat greater for only and middle children compared alone than when all four orders of birth are compared. This fact agrees with the findings of the percentages in most four group tables, namely, that the differences between only and oldest, and between only and youngest children, were usually smaller than between only and middle children.

TABLE 11

COMPARISONS OF ALL FOUR ORDERS OF BIRTH

	Coefficients of Contingency	
	Male	Female
Parent-Child Relations Showing Considerable and Significant Differences		
Attention given the child by mother	.220	.273
Extent everything done for the child	.215	.232
Indulgence of the child by mother	.177	.185
Indulgence of the child by father	....	.185
Relations Showing Differences Which Are Small and Not Significant		
Indulgence of the child by father	.158	....
Pressure to fulfill parental ambitions	.126	.123
Restriction from play by mother	.114	.110

TABLE 12

COMPARISONS OF ONLY AND MIDDLE CHILDREN

	Coefficients of Contingency	
	Male	Female
Parent-Child Relations Showing Considerable and Significant Differences		
Attention given the child by mother	.276	.347
Extent everything was done for the child	.262	.316
Attention given the child by father	.210	.256
Extent of mother's love	.206	.237
Indulgence of the child by father	.216	.241
Indulgence of the child by mother	.200	.241
Demonstrativeness of the mother	.189	.245
Anxiety of mother for child's welfare and safety	....	.215
Relations Showing Differences Which Are Small and Not Significant		
Extent of father's love	.163	.145
Anxiety of mother for child's welfare and safety	.154	....
Anxiety of father for child's welfare and safety	.138	.143
Rebellion against discipline at home	.062	.081
Demonstrativeness of the father toward both boys and girls	*	*

*Coefficients not computed.

In nearly all comparisons of both sexes the differences between only and oldest, as well as between only and youngest children, were small. In some tables the percentages for only, oldest, and youngest groups were practically the same in most of the categories.

Although some tables revealed more or less marked differences between intermediate and only children, these differences applied to only small percentages of only children in most cases, and the overlapping of percentages in most categories between the two groups was usually quite large. The percentages of middle, as well as only children, were often quite high in the "very great deal" and "good deal" classifications, in tables such as those on mother's love, father's love, anxiety for the child's welfare and safety by each parent, and attention by the mother. Only children often checked in the "average" category nearly the same percentage as did the middle group. Moreover, in a number of tables the only group, as well as the middle group, frequently checked substantial percentages in the "little" and "very little or none" columns, indicating, for instance, that many of them were not rebellious, indulged, restricted from play, or that their parents were not demonstrative, or prone to put pressure on them to fulfill parental ambitions.

In most parent-child relations compared in the larger statistical study very large proportions of only children were shown to be treated the same as oldest and youngest children, and quite high percentages much the same as middle children by both parents. The statistical data failed to bear out popular notions as to the great contrasts between the parental treatment of only children and those reared with brothers and sisters.

Furthermore, the children within each order of birth were

not treated uniformly, but the treatment often varied considerably with the sex of the parent and with the sex of the child. The father's treatment of the boys was often more moderate than his treatment of the girls, but the mother usually varied little in her treatment of each sex. The father's treatment of both boys and girls within each order of birth, however, was usually considerably more moderate than the mother's treatment of both sexes.

CHAPTER III

PARENT-CHILD RELATIONS: LIFE HISTORY DATA

Since the data of the larger statistical study failed, with some exceptions, to reveal very marked differences between the parental treatment of only children and that given other children, and showed, also, that large proportions of only children were treated much the same as those in other orders of birth, the question naturally arises, how far do the life histories bear out the same conclusions? Would an intensive analysis of the life histories reveal differences not brought out in the statistical tables? What findings in the statistical data would be supplemented, and what conclusions confirmed, by the data of the life histories? These questions will be the main objects of investigation in the present chapter. The self-ratings of only and of middle children in the schedules may not be comparable on many points which an outsider might rate differently. Life history data, however, make possible a comparable rating by a third person.

Some of the same questions on parent-child relations as were used in the schedule were answered in enough detail in the life histories to enable the writer to compute another set of tables based upon the life history data. Table 13, based upon the life history data, presents the extent of indulgence of only children and middle children by the mother. The much larger percentages of only than of middle children in the "very great deal" and "good deal" categories, and the much smaller percentages of only children in the "little" and "very little or none" categories reveal a considerably marked difference in the indulgence of

only and middle children by the mother.

TABLE 13
EXTENT OF INDULGENCE BY MOTHER
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very great deal	16	24.3	3	3.2
Good deal	17	25.8	14	14.8
Average	23	34.9	29	30.5
Little	9	13.6	33	34.8
Very little or none	1	1.5	16	16.8
Total	66	100.1	95	100.1

Table 14 presents the extent of indulgence by the father as revealed in the life histories.

TABLE 14
EXTENT OF INDULGENCE BY FATHER
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very great deal	14	21.2	6	6.3
Good deal	21	31.8	13	13.7
Average	21	31.8	28	29.5
Little	9	13.6	29	30.5
Very little or none	1	1.5	19	20.0
Total	66	99.9	95	100.0

Here again the life histories indicate a considerably greater degree of indulgence for only than for middle children, although the difference is somewhat less marked in the "very great deal" category than was true of the mother's indulgence. If Table 2 in chapter 11 is compared with the foregoing table, it may be observed that the life history data again show somewhat more difference between only and middle children on indulgence by the father than do the statistical schedules. The difference between the two bodies of data, however, is less marked than in the case of indulgence by the mother. The only children checked

themselves as indulged by the father somewhat less in the schedules than they were found to be indulged in the life histories, but there was little difference in the case of the middle children.

The degree of anxiety expressed by each of the parents for the child's welfare and safety was also the subject of analysis in the life histories. Table 15 summarizes the findings on only and intermediate children on this question.

TABLE 15
ANXIETY FOR THE CHILD'S WELFARE AND SAFETY
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Anxiety of the Mother				
Very great deal	37	55.2	44	46.3
Good deal	23	34.3	33	34.8
Average	7	10.5	14	14.8
Little	0	0.0	3	3.2
Very little or none	0	0.0	1	1.0
Total	67	100.0	95	100.1
Anxiety of the Father				
Very great deal	25	37.1	28	39.5
Good deal	24	35.9	35	36.8
Average	15	22.4	24	25.3
Little	3	4.5	6	6.3
Very little or none	0	0.0	2	2.1
Total	67	99.9	95	100.0

Both mothers and fathers of only children in the life histories were judged to be somewhat more concerned about the welfare and safety of their children than were the parents of middle children. Eight to 9 per cent more of the parents of only children seemed to express "a very great deal" of anxiety. The differences in the other categories, however, are very small, and there is a great deal of overlapping of percentages in all of the upper categories. Moreover, the largest percentages are concentrated in the upper categories for both groups of children, show-

ing that the great majority of parents of middle, as well as of only children, are deeply concerned about their children.

If this table is compared with Table 7 in chapter 11 on the mother's anxiety for the child, it may be observed that the only children checked the statistical schedules from 14 to 18 per cent higher, depending upon the sex of the child, in the "very great deal" category, but about 12 per cent lower in the "good deal" column than they were rated in the life histories. The middle children also checked the schedules about 10 per cent higher in the "very great deal" category than they were checked in life histories. Consequently, although the life histories were judged as showing the mother to be somewhat less extreme in her anxiety, the statistical study did not show a much greater difference between only and middle children than did the life histories.

Table 8 in chapter 11 also shows a considerably greater amount of anxiety of the father in the statistical study than in the life history data. The differences between only and middle children are also somewhat greater than is shown in the life histories. However, the differences between the two types of data are not great in regard to the anxiety of both parents, and the general trend of differences between only and middle children is the same in both studies.

Table 16 brings out the fact that only children are given a great deal more attention by each parent than are middle children. The wide differences in attention given the two groups is brought out strikingly by the much higher percentages of only children than of middle children who were judged as receiving "a very great deal" of attention. Nearly twice the proportion of only as of middle children received an extreme amount of attention by the mother, while only 6 per cent of the only children as

against 23.2 of the middle group received only an "average" amount. Almost as great a difference is revealed also in the amount of attention given the two groups by the father, although both intermediate and only children are given much less attention by the father than by the mother. In fact, the mother gave almost as much attention to the middle children as did the father to the only children.

TABLE 16
AMOUNT OF ATTENTION GIVEN THE CHILD
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Attention Given by the Mother				
Very great deal	37	55.2	27	28.4
Good deal	25	37.2	40	42.1
Average	4	6.0	22	23.2
Little	1	1.5	6	6.3
Very little or none	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	67	99.9	95	100.0
Attention Given by the Father				
Very great deal	23	34.3	14	14.8
Good deal	27	40.3	33	34.7
Average	12	17.9	34	35.8
Little	4	6.0	11	11.6
Very little or none	1	1.5	3	3.2
Total	67	100.0	95	100.1

When Table 5 in chapter 11, on attention by the mother, is compared with Table 16, it may be noted that a somewhat greater difference was found between only and middle children in the life histories than in the statistical study for the mother's attention to the boys, but a somewhat smaller difference for girls. If the percentages of the boys and girls of the larger statistical study were averaged, the difference between the two studies on attention given by the mother would be slight. Thus the findings of the two studies on this point agree closely. When Table 6 in chapter 11, on attention by the father, is compared with Table 16,

the differences are only slight between the two types of studies. Thus the life history data agree closely with the statistical data on the amount of attention given by both the mother and the father.

The degree of the parents' love for the child was another phenomenon studied in the life histories. Table 17 presents the degree of love given only children in comparison with intermediate children by each parent.

TABLE 17
EXTENT OF THE PARENTS' LOVE FOR THE CHILD
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Extent of Mother's Love				
Very great deal	47	71.2	58	61.1
Good deal	15	22.8	29	30.5
Average	4	6.0	8	8.4
Little	0	0.0	0	0.0
Very little or none	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	66	100.0	95	100.0
Extent of Father's Love				
Very great deal	41	62.1	37	39.0
Good deal	18	27.3	37	39.0
Average	6	9.1	17	17.9
Little	1	1.5	4	4.2
Very little or none	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	66	100.0	95	100.1

This table shows that the difference in mother love between the two groups was not very marked, although there was some difference. It is significant that none of the children of either group seemed to think that they were loved less than average, and only small percentages only "average" by their mothers.

But a rather marked difference was discovered in the extent of the father's love. Twenty-three per cent more of only than of middle children were described as being loved "a very

great deal," while 9 per cent more of middle than of only children were loved only "average" by their fathers. However, 12 per cent more of middle than of only children seemed to fall in the "good deal" category. It is interesting to note that here again, as in the amount of attention, the mothers seemed to love both groups of children considerably more than did the father. In fact, the mother loved the middle children as much as the father loved the only children. The greatest difference appeared to be between the love of the mother and the father for the middle children, where only about half as many of the fathers as mothers loved their middle children "a very great deal."

The findings of the life history data agreed fairly closely with the statistical data on the extent of both the mother's and the father's love for both only and middle children. The same general trend of the greatest proportion of only and middle children falling in the "very great deal" category was evident in both bodies of data. A close analysis of the life histories of only children disclosed a high percentage of cases of very deep love, close intimacy and attachment between parents and child.

A few general conclusions may be made on this part of the present study. On some parent-child relations the findings of the life history data agree fairly closely with the findings of the statistical study, and both studies tend to support the same conclusions. On other questions there is some, but not marked, disagreement in the findings of the two studies. The same general trends of difference between only and middle children are quite evident on all parent-children relations in both studies, however.

It was not possible to ascertain exactly the extent to which other factors and conditions, in addition to position in the family, were the causes of differences between only and middle

children in regard to the various types of parental treatment. Doubtless a great deal more of careful research would be required for this task. The life history data revealed, however, that some of these factors played quite a significant role in many cases, and seemed to be important contributing factors to certain types of parental treatment. The life histories reveal the role of other factors than order of birth in parental indulgence, anxiety for welfare, attention, and love. These other factors taken together, and sometimes individually, appear to be more important than birth order in many cases.

CHAPTER IV

SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT AND UNADJUSTMENT

Current theory and popular literature are replete with assertions as to the great difficulty which only children usually experience in adjusting to other children. Such statements as the following are typical of these writings. "The only child is greatly handicapped socially He cannot be expected to go through life with the same capacity for adjustment as have other children;"¹ "He is unpopular, 'spoiled,' and as time goes on he finds it more and more difficult to fit into life with his fellow-beings;"² "His mother's close restriction handicaps him seriously for the activities of adult life."³ The only child is accused repeatedly of being in a difficult position outside the home, and of being greatly unadjusted in his later social relations. His "unsocial" or "anti-social" traits and peculiar characteristics are especially emphasized.

The chief aim of the present chapter will be to present data which might throw light on the follow two questions: Are only children usually more unadjusted than are middle, oldest, or youngest children during the grade school, high school, and college periods? How closely do the findings of the life history data agree with those of the statistical data on this subject?

¹S. and M. G. Blanton, Child Guidance (New York: The Century Co., 1927), pp. 175-76.

²Eva Neal, "The Only Child," Mental Hygiene Bulletin, V (1927), pp. 1-2.

³H. A. Bruce, Your Growing Child (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1927), pp. 81-82.

Krueger and Reckless define social adjustment and unadjustment in terms of the degree of satisfaction of wishes, the efficiency of social behavior, and the absence or presence of mental conflicts. They emphasize the point that both inner, emotional disturbances and lack of adjustment in external social relations are but two interrelated phases of the same phenomenon; and that both mental and social indices must be considered in determining degrees of social adjustment and unadjustment.¹ This is the conception of social adjustment and unadjustment adhered to in this dissertation.

Many of the same indices of social adjustment and unadjustment were utilized in the statistical study as were found in the life histories. Since the indices of social participation, or of isolation, appeared also to be important indices of social adjustment or unadjustment, those indices for which the tables are not given here will also be referred to in this chapter. The following questions, in addition to those on participation and isolation, were asked in the schedule for the grade school period. To what degree were you "made fun of" or "bullied" during the grade school period? To what extent did you take the lead in play? To what extent did you rebel against discipline in grade school? Table 18 reveals little difference in social adjustment among the different orders of birth for the boys during the grade school period. The difference was significant in no comparison.

Table 19 shows even less difference among the girls than among the boys on the same indices of social adjustment. None of the differences was found to be significant.

These two tables reveal, according to the indices used,

¹E. T. Krueger and W. C. Reckless, Social Psychology (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1931), pp. 388-89.

TABLE 18

ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
BOYS; GRADE SCHOOL PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Degree "Made Fun of" or "Bullied"				
Very great deal	1.5	1.5	1.0	1.0
Good deal	9.6	7.6	9.6	6.0
Average	18.2	18.7	13.6	17.2
Little	30.8	34.3	26.8	26.8
Very little or none	39.9	37.9	49.0	49.0
C .121				
Extent Took the Lead in Play				
Very great deal	3.0	4.0	6.6	6.0
Good deal	24.2	22.2	28.3	27.3
Average	45.0	43.4	39.4	45.0
Little	21.7	22.2	20.7	16.7
Very little or none	6.1	8.1	5.0	5.0
C .110				
Rebellion against Discipline in Grade School				
Very great deal	5.6	*	*	2.0
Good deal	11.1	....	....	16.7
Average	28.3	....	....	23.3
Little	33.8	....	....	32.3
Very little or none	21.2	....	....	25.7
#				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children.

#C not computed.

that only children of both sexes were as well adjusted as oldest, youngest, or middle children in the grade school period. The fact that high percentages of only children, as well as others, were "made fun of" or "bullied" "little" or "very little"; that a large proportion took the lead in play "a good deal" or "average"; and that the largest percentages of them rebelled against discipline "little" or "very little" indicates that most of the only children were quite well adjusted. It was found also that only children took part in active group games almost as much as other children, and were but little more isolated in this period, a further evidence that they were about as well adjusted as were

the other groups of children.

TABLE 19
ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
GIRLS; GRADE SCHOOL PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Degree "Made Fun of" or "Bullied"				
Very great deal	.5	1.1	0.0	.3
Good deal	1.9	3.0	1.9	2.2
Average	8.8	7.1	9.3	6.8
Little	19.5	16.2	19.7	15.6
Very little or none	69.3	72.6	69.1	75.1
C	.088			
Extent Took the Lead in Play				
Very great deal	5.5	5.2	5.2	4.7
Good deal	21.1	23.8	25.2	20.5
Average	48.0	45.7	44.1	49.9
Little	19.4	17.3	20.0	20.5
Very little or none	6.0	8.0	5.5	4.4
C	.076			
Rebellion against Discipline in Grade School				
Very great deal	2.7	*	*	2.7
Good deal	6.3	....	....	6.3
Average	15.9	....	....	21.9
Little	27.7	....	....	32.3
Very little or none	47.4	....	....	36.7
#				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children.

#C not computed.

The findings of the life histories for the grade school period disclose that only children were judged to be as well adjusted as middle children, and that a high proportion of them were more or less well adjusted. Table 20 gives the results of this analysis. Although a somewhat higher percentage of only children than of middle children was rated as "very well adjusted," slightly higher percentages of only children were also rated as "greatly unadjusted," and "somewhat unadjusted." Consequently little difference is shown between the two groups in the life his-

tory data.

TABLE 20
DEGREE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OR UNADJUSTMENT
GRADE SCHOOL PERIOD
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very well adjusted	28	41.2	34	35.8
Fairly well adjusted	16	23.5	34	35.8
Somewhat unadjusted	14	20.6	16	16.8
Greatly unadjusted	10	14.7	11	11.6
Total	68	100.0	95	100.0

For the high school period the following questions on social adjustment, in addition to those on social participation, were placed in the schedules. How much did you take the lead in social affairs during the high school period? To what degree were you retiring at social affairs? To what degree did you feel self-conscious or embarrassed at social affairs? To what extent did you feel inferior during the high school period? The results of these questions are summarized for the boys in Table 21 below.

The only boys rated themselves about the same as did each of the other classes of boys on all of these indices. Apparently they took the lead slightly more and were slightly less retiring at social affairs than any of the other groups. They rated themselves as feeling slightly less self-conscious and inferior than did middle boys. In no instance was the difference significant.

Table 22 shows practically the same findings for the girls as for the boys in the high school period. Only slight differences are shown among all groups of girls on all indices of social adjustment for this period. None of the differences are significant. Only girls rated themselves as taking the lead slightly more than did any of the others, but they were retiring

at social affairs to about the same degree as each of the other groups. Only and middle girls rated themselves about the same on self-consciousness and inferiority.

TABLE 21

ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
BOYS; HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Extent Took the Lead at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	6.1	6.1	4.0	5.0
Good deal	20.7	18.2	17.2	16.7
Average	31.8	21.2	28.3	22.7
Little	23.2	28.3	26.8	25.8
Very little or none	18.2	26.3	23.7	29.8
C	.134			
Degree Person Was Retiring at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	4.5	6.1	7.1	6.1
Good deal	12.1	17.2	16.2	13.6
Average	27.8	24.2	21.7	28.3
Little	36.4	31.8	37.4	28.3
Very little or none	19.2	20.7	17.7	23.7
C	.098			
Degree Felt Self-Conscious at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	2.5	*	*	5.0
Good deal	17.2	....	....	15.2
Average	22.7	....	....	25.8
Little	25.8	....	....	29.8
Very little or none	31.8	....	....	24.2
C	.111			
Extent Felt Inferior during High School Period				
Very great deal	1.0	*	*	4.0
Good deal	5.6	....	....	9.1
Average	16.7	....	....	18.2
Little	40.9	....	....	30.8
Very little or none	35.9	....	....	37.9
#				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children.

#C not computed.

The high percentages of only children of both sexes who rated themselves as feeling self-conscious and inferior "little" or "very little," and the large percentages who were retiring to

the same degrees, indicate their generally good adjustment during the high school period.

TABLE 22

ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
GIRLS; HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Extent Took the Lead at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	8.5	6.8	5.2	7.7
Good deal	19.7	19.2	20.8	19.2
Average	29.0	30.1	29.9	29.0
Little	26.3	24.7	29.9	26.9
Very little or none	16.5	19.2	14.2	17.3
C .071				
Degree Person Was Retiring at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	4.1	4.9	4.7	4.7
Good deal	15.1	15.3	13.4	12.3
Average	19.7	24.4	25.5	20.8
Little	32.6	32.1	33.4	33.4
Very little or none	28.5	23.3	23.0	28.8
C .081				
Degree Felt Self-Conscious at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	3.8	*	*	2.7
Good deal	12.6	....	....	13.4
Average	15.1	....	....	20.3
Little	27.7	....	....	31.0
Very little or none	40.8	....	....	32.6
C .101				
Extent Felt Inferior during High School Period				
Very great deal	1.9	*	*	1.6
Good deal	9.6	....	....	8.0
Average	16.4	....	....	21.4
Little	28.8	....	....	34.2
Very little or none	43.3	....	....	34.8
#				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children.

#C not computed.

The life history data also agree closely with the statistical findings for this period, as revealed in the next table. Although a somewhat greater proportion of only than of middle children were judged as "very well adjusted," a slightly lower

proportion of middle children were rated as "greatly unadjusted" and "somewhat unadjusted," and a considerably higher proportion of the middle group were "fairly well adjusted." Thus there appears to be little difference between the two groups in the life history data in the high school period. It is significant that over half of the only children were rated as "very well adjusted" or "fairly well adjusted," and only 14.7 per cent as "greatly unadjusted."

TABLE 23
DEGREE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OR UNADJUSTMENT
HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very well adjusted	26	38.2	28	29.4
Fairly well adjusted	11	16.2	27	28.4
Somewhat unadjusted	21	30.9	28	29.4
Greatly unadjusted	10	14.7	12	12.8
Total	68	100.0	95	100.0

The facts that only children of both sexes were found, in another part of this study, to participate in social affairs somewhat more than any other group, and, in both types of data, to be no more isolated, support the foregoing findings in the conclusion that only children were as well adjusted as children of any other birth order in the high school period. Both types of data also reveal the fact that high percentages of only children of both sexes were rated as more or less well adjusted, while low proportions appeared to be greatly unadjusted in the high school period.

For the college period a number of indices of social adjustment and unadjustment were employed. They include the extent of participation in social affairs, degree of indulgence in solitary recreations, how much the person likes to be by himself, and

the degree of absorption in his own interests. Included also are the extent the person took the lead, or was retiring, at social affairs, degree of self-confidence before a contest, difficulty in asking questions in class, degree of self-consciousness when called upon to recite in class, degree the person felt inferior in college, extent of worry over the future, degree he was subject to periods of depression, sensitiveness to remarks about his personal appearance, and quickness to condemn people for failure to live up to his standards.¹ The first table discloses little difference among the four groups of boys on five of these indices of social adjustment for the college period.

Only boys rated themselves as taking the lead at social affairs only slightly less, and as being retiring to about the same degree as each of the other groups of boys. Although they appeared to feel a little less self-confident before a contest, they seemed not to have as much difficulty asking questions in class as any of the others. Moreover, only boys rated themselves as feeling a little less self-conscious than middle boys when called upon to recite in class. The difference was significant in no instance, however.

Table 25 gives the comparisons for girls on the same five indices of social adjustment for the college period as presented for the boys in Table 24. The similarity of percentages in all categories and the low coefficients show that all classes of girls were adjusted to about the same degree according to all five indices. The only girls took the lead practically as much, and were no more retiring, at social affairs than any of the other

¹Because of the number of indices employed for the college period, only the most significant comparisons are presented here in table form. The results of other comparisons are summarized in this chapter, however.

groups. They felt a little less self-confident before a contest, but had somewhat less difficulty in asking questions in class than any of the others. The only girls also felt a little less

TABLE 24

ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
BOYS; COLLEGE PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 198			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Extent Took the Lead at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	.5	1.0	1.0	1.5
Good deal	8.1	4.5	6.6	5.1
Average	25.2	29.3	21.7	23.7
Little	37.9	24.8	30.8	29.8
Very little or none	28.3	40.4	39.9	39.9
C .146				
Degree Person Was Retiring at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	5.6	4.0	6.1	6.1
Good deal	12.1	13.7	11.1	12.6
Average	30.8	20.2	24.2	24.2
Little	32.3	40.9	37.9	32.3
Very little or none	19.2	21.2	20.7	24.8
C .113				
Extent of Self-Confidence before a Contest				
Very great deal	4.6	8.1	10.1	9.6
Good deal	31.3	37.9	37.9	36.9
Average	49.0	45.4	37.4	39.4
Little	12.6	6.6	11.6	10.6
Very little or none	2.5	2.0	3.0	3.5
C .136				
Difficulty in Asking Questions in Class				
Very great deal	2.5	2.5	4.0	4.5
Good deal	9.1	15.7	14.2	17.7
Average	32.3	28.8	18.2	27.2
Little	26.3	29.8	33.8	25.3
Very little or none	29.8	23.2	29.8	25.3
C .160				
Self-Consciousness When Called upon to Recite in Class				
Very great deal	2.5	*	*	6.1
Good deal	6.6	....	....	11.6
Average	28.3	....	....	22.2
Little	33.8	....	....	31.3
Very little or none	28.8	....	....	28.8
C .135				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children

self-conscious when called upon to recite in class than did the

middle girls. In no instance was the difference significant, however.

TABLE 25
ORDER OF BIRTH AND CERTAIN INDICES OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT
GIRLS; COLLEGE PERIOD

	Number in Each Order of Birth 365			
	Only %	Oldest %	Youngest %	Middle %
Extent Took the Lead at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	1.9	1.1	1.6	2.5
Good deal	6.0	11.2	6.8	8.2
Average	26.0	26.3	28.0	19.7
Little	34.0	33.2	29.3	34.5
Very little or none	32.1	28.2	34.3	35.1
C .114				
Degree Person Was Retiring at Social Affairs				
Very great deal	3.6	3.6	2.7	3.6
Good deal	12.6	11.8	12.6	12.6
Average	23.8	26.3	29.3	29.3
Little	34.8	31.2	34.0	35.1
Very little or none	25.2	27.1	21.4	19.4
C .080				
Extent of Self-Confidence before a Contest				
Very great deal	1.9	3.6	3.5	6.3
Good deal	21.7	26.3	22.5	21.4
Average	47.7	43.3	46.6	47.9
Little	24.9	21.1	21.1	20.0
Very little or none	3.8	5.7	6.3	4.4
C .110				
Difficulty in Asking Questions in Class				
Very great deal	3.6	7.1	5.8	7.4
Good deal	17.0	21.7	21.4	20.3
Average	26.3	20.3	27.1	29.0
Little	26.3	26.0	26.8	25.2
Very little or none	26.8	24.9	18.9	18.1
C .125				
Self-Consciousness When Called upon to Recite in Class				
Very great deal	4.1	*	*	6.8
Good deal	9.9	....	....	16.2
Average	29.3	....	....	29.0
Little	29.9	....	....	24.4
Very little or none	26.8	....	....	23.6
C .121				

*Data not computed for oldest and youngest children.

According to the ratings on the indices in the foregoing

tables, the only children of both sexes were as well adjusted as any of the other birth orders. The findings on all of the other indices of social adjustment based on the statistical data also support the conclusion that only children were as well adjusted as oldest, youngest, or middle children during the college period.

The life history data for the college period disclosed the fact that only children were rated about the same as middle children on social adjustment. A summary of the ratings is given in Table 26.

TABLE 26
DEGREE OF SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OR UNADJUSTMENT
COLLEGE PERIOD
(Life History Data)

	Only		Middle	
	Number	%	Number	%
Very well adjusted	22	32.4	31	33.3
Fairly well adjusted	24	35.3	29	31.2
Somewhat unadjusted	17	25.0	20	21.5
Greatly unadjusted	5	7.3	13	14.0
Total	68	100.0	93	100.0

Whereas about the same proportions of middle and only children were rated as "very well" and "fairly well" adjusted, about 7 per cent more, or twice as large a proportion, of middle as of only children were found to be "greatly unadjusted." A slightly higher percentage of the only group were judged to be "somewhat unadjusted," however. Since other data, based on the life histories, disclosed the fact that the only group was rated as somewhat less isolated than middle children in the college period, both sets of indices show that the only children were a little better adjusted than middle children. Thus the findings of the life history data agree closely with those of the statistical data.

Burgess and Cavan, in their study of junior high school students, also found little difference in the degree of adjustment among only, oldest, youngest, and middle children.¹ On the personality test for boys 43.6 per cent of only, as against 44.2 per cent of oldest, 41.0 per cent of youngest, and 36.2 per cent of middle children were scored as having "good adjustment." On the same test for girls 50.3 per cent of only, as against 48.1 of oldest, 45.7 per cent of youngest, and 48.0 per cent of middle children were scored as having "good adjustment." Slightly smaller percentages of only children of both sexes than of any other group were scored as having "poor adjustment." Thus the only children of both sexes were found to be slightly better adjusted than any other group on the personality test.

Summary and Conclusions

The statistical data show that, during the grade school period, only children of both sexes were "made fun of" and "bullied" no more than were oldest, youngest, or middle children. Only children also took the lead in play as much as any of the other groups. They rebelled against discipline no more than middle children. They were found to participate in active group games almost as much as any other group, and to be but little more isolated than any of the other classes of children. Thus, according to these indices, the only children of both sexes appear to have been practically as well adjusted as any of the other groups in the grade school period. Moreover, a high proportion of only children of each sex rated itself as being more or less well adjusted, whereas a relatively low proportion rated itself as being

¹The Adolescent in the Family, Report of the Subcommittee on the Function of Home Activities, White House Conference on Child Health and Protection (New York: D. Appleton-Century Co., 1934), Table 85, p. 396.

more or less unadjusted. The findings of the life history data for the grade school period agree closely with those of the statistical data.

For the high school period the statistical data reveal the fact that only children of both sexes rated themselves as taking the lead at social affairs a little more, and as being retiring at social affairs slightly less than any of the other groups. Only boys were slightly less self-conscious at social affairs, and felt a little less inferior than did middle boys. Only and middle girls scored about the same on these two indices. Only children of both sexes participated in social affairs somewhat more, and were no more isolated than any of the other groups. Thus, according to these indices, the only children of both sexes were as well adjusted as any of the other classes of children in the high school period. Moreover, a high proportion of only children of each sex rated themselves as more or less well adjusted, and a relatively low proportion as more or less unadjusted. The life history data disclosed substantially the same findings as did the statistical data for the high school period.

The statistical data show, for the college period, that only children of both sexes rated themselves about the same as each of the other orders of birth on all of several indices, and that, according to these measures, they were as well adjusted as any of the other groups of children. These indices disclose also that a fairly high proportion of only children of each sex was more or less well adjusted, and that only small percentages were more or less unadjusted in the college period. The findings of the life history data agree closely with those of the statistical data for this period.

CHAPTER V

GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

A few general conclusions may now be drawn. The three main hypotheses suggested by current theory, popular opinion, and early studies of only children, namely: that the parental treatment accorded only children is nearly always greatly different from that accorded children with siblings; that the indulgence, attention, love, and protection of only children by their parents is nearly always greatly exaggerated; and that only children are much more likely to be greatly isolated and greatly unadjusted than are other children, were not verified, but found to be quite untrue according to both types of data on college students in the present investigation. The majority of only children were found to be treated much the same as oldest, youngest, and middle children by their parents, to participate as fully and normally in group life after the pre-school period, and to be as well adjusted in their social relations, as any other children. The mere fact of being an only child was not found to be a significant factor in producing an isolated or unadjusted person during the grade, high school, and college periods. Moreover, in the majority of cases, the single factor of "onliness" was not closely associated with abnormal parent-child relations, or with an abnormal home environment.

No assumption is made here, however, that the present study proves these findings and conclusions to be true for all only children. They apply only to a special group in the general population, that of a general cross section of modern American

college students of the white race, tested by the two methods of statistics and case studies. The objection might be raised that the group of college students is highly selected and therefore, contains a large proportion of well adjusted children of all orders of birth.¹ Perhaps other types of population groups tested adequately by different methods and research techniques might discover very different results, or verify the hypotheses of current theory and popular belief. It is possible that the psychiatric interview technique, exploring more deeply into the mental life of the person, might arrive at findings more or less different from those obtained by the methods of the present research. Not enough reliable data have been submitted and analyzed in an unbiased and objective manner thus far, however, to verify these hypotheses, or to prove conclusively other different hypotheses.

On the other hand, a number of other studies such as those of kindergarten, grade, high school, and college students, delinquent children, and those in behavior clinics, which include large samples of other groups in the general population, substantiate, with minor exceptions, the main findings and conclusions of the present study. Thus the great weight of social and psychological research points to the conclusion that, for a number of groups in the general population, most only children enjoy as normal a home environment, participate as fully and normally in group activities, and are as well adjusted in their personal life and social relations, as are children with brothers and sisters.

Other types of research in this field which might yield fruitful results are: analysis of many full life histories and

¹It is quite possible that the psychiatrist, in studying cases of extreme maladjustment, may find a high disproportion of only children. There are, however, no data as yet available to substantiate this hypothesis.

other personal documents to ascertain what differences could be found between only and middle children in regard to types of personal behavior patterns, personality traits, and adjustment in their more intimate relations, as in love affairs, marriage, and sex relations. Similar studies might be made comparing other orders of birth, such as only and oldest children, only and youngest, oldest and youngest, or middle children with oldest or youngest children. Other types of research techniques such as interviews and observations in special situations, might be employed, or combined with personal documents and statistical schedules in these different types of studies. Since some differences appeared in the life histories between children in small urban families and those in large rural families, these two types of families might also be studied with profit. Typical processes producing different types of social adjustment in comparing two birth orders, including recurring factors both inside and outside of the family, which interact with one another, is another possibility. The factors interacting to produce certain degrees of social isolation might also be studied.

APPENDIX I

STATISTICAL SCHEDULE

I would like to enlist your assistance in a scientific study which I have been carrying on for about four years. I am chiefly interested in comparing the experiences which different students have had in certain family relationships and in association with their fellows. For this purpose I have prepared a list of questions which can be answered very briefly with a check mark, a number, or a single word, as "yes" or "no." Since the value of this study will depend upon the accuracy of the answers which you give, will you think back carefully over your experiences and be as unbiased and exact as possible? I am also making the following requests:

1. Please be certain that you understand each question before answering it.
2. Please do not discuss the questions with anyone while answering them.
3. Be sure to answer every question as you go and finish them all. If you cannot remember certain points, make as close a guess as possible.
4. Since it is not necessary to reveal your identity you need not sign your name.

THE QUESTIONS

Year of birth _____ Sex _____ Race _____

Please write in spaces below the year of birth (in order from oldest to youngest) and the sex of each child in the family, including yourself. (Do not include infants who died at or before birth.) Also give year of death of any who have not survived after birth. Put a circle around the number indicating your place in order of birth. If you are an only child write "only child" just below the order of birth.

Order of Birth	Year of Birth	Sex (M) (F)	Year of Death	Please write in blank space below, the years of birth, sex, and years of death of half-brothers and sis- ters, and step-brothers and sisters who lived in your home.
1.	_____	_____	_____	
2.	_____	_____	_____	
3.	_____	_____	_____	
4.	_____	_____	_____	
5.	_____	_____	_____	
6.	_____	_____	_____	
7.	_____	_____	_____	
8.	_____	_____	_____	
9.	_____	_____	_____	
10.	_____	_____	_____	
11.	_____	_____	_____	
12.	_____	_____	_____	

SECTION I. ISOLATION AND SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

In the following scheme the aim is to arrive at some comparisons with the average of children and young people of your generation and home community. That is, in rating yourself you are to take as your standard of comparison what you think would be true of the average child or young person of your time and home community. Please place a check mark in the appropriate square after each of the following questions. Be sure to put only one check after each question.

PRE-SCHOOL PERIOD	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Average)	Little	Very little or none
1. How much did you play <u>alone</u> before grade school?					
2. To what extent did you play with only <u>one</u> playmate (including brother or sister) before grade school?					
3. To what degree did you play with groups of 2 or 3 children (including brothers and sisters) before grade school?					
4. How much did you play with larger groups (4 or more, including brothers and sisters)?					
5. To what degree did you play with imaginary playmates?					
6. To what extent did you day-dream or live in an imaginary world before grade school?					
GRADE SCHOOL PERIOD					
7. To what extent did you play active group games during grade school?					
8. How much did you indulge in less active games with only a few playmates during grade school?					
9. To what extent did you play with only <u>one</u> favorite "pal" during the grade period?					
10. How much did you remain apart from all other children in grade school?					

GRADE SCHOOL PERIOD-- <u>Continued</u>	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Average)	Little	Very little or none
11. To what extent did physical defects or peculiarities (e.g., stuttering, being too fat, overgrown, too little, etc.) cause you to feel out of place or inferior?					
12. To what degree were you "made fun of" or "bullied"?					
13. To what extent did you take the lead in play?					
14. To what extent did you daydream during the grades?					
15. How much time did you spend <u>alone</u> reading, with music, or some other solitary occupation during the grades?					

HIGH SCHOOL PERIOD

16. How much did you take part in <u>social</u> affairs, such as parties, dances, teas, "socials," etc. (not including athletics or student activities) during the high school period?					
17. How much did you take the lead at social affairs during high school?					
18. To what degree were you <u>retiring</u> at social affairs during high school?					
19. To what degree did you feel self-conscious or embarrassed at social affairs during the high school period?					
20. To what extent did you feel inferior during the high school period?					
21. How much did you daydream during the high school period?					
22. How much time did you spend <u>alone</u> reading, with music, or some other solitary occupation in the high school period?					

COLLEGE PERIOD	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Average)	Little	Very little or none
23. To what extent have you taken part in social affairs during college?					
24. To what extent have you taken the <u>lead</u> at social affairs in college?					
25. To what degree have you been <u>retiring</u> at social affairs in college?					
26. To what degree have you felt inferior in college?					
27. What nicknames were given you in childhood? _____ In high school? _____ In college? _____					
28. Was it usually easy, fairly easy, or difficult to meet new people during the high school period? _____ During college? _____					

SECTION II. FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Is your father living? _____ If not, when did he die? _____
 Is your mother living? _____ If not, when did she die? _____
 Were your parents separated? _____ When? _____
 If not permanently, for how many years? _____
 Were they divorced? _____ When? _____
 If reared by somebody other than your own mother part of the time, by whom were you reared? _____
 Between what ages? _____
 Country of father _____ Of mother _____

	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Average)	Little	Very little or none
29. To what extent were you restricted from play with other children by your mother during childhood?					
30. To what degree was your mother anxious for your welfare and safety?					
31. To what degree was your father anxious for your welfare and safety?					
32. How much attention were you given as a child by your mother?					
33. How much attention were you given by your father?					

	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Aver- age)	Little	Very little or none
34. To what extent were you <u>indulged</u> by your mother during childhood? (By "indulged" is meant giving a child many things which he wants, but which are not necessary for his happiness and welfare.)					
35. How much were you indulged by your father?					
36. How much do you think your mother loved you as a child?					
37. To what extent was your mother demonstrative in her affections for you, e.g., embracing and kissing often?					
38. To what degree do you think your father loved you?					
39. To what extent was your father demonstrative in his affection for you?					
40. To what extent was nearly everything planned or done <u>for</u> you by your parents during childhood?					
41. To what degree have your parents put pressure on you to fulfill their ambitions for you?					
42. To what extent was there discord between your parents?					

SECTION III. PERSONALITY TRAITS

In answering the following questions please consider the last few years only, except where otherwise specified.

	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Aver- age)	Little	Very little or none
43. To what extent have you indulged in <u>solitary</u> recreations, e.g., played solitaire at cards, gone to shows or hiked alone, etc.?					

	A very great deal	A good deal	Some (Average)	Little	Very little or none
44. To what extent are you moved by accounts of great suffering of people in disasters (fires, floods, etc.) in some state where you have never been?					
45. How much are you subject to periods of depression?					
46. How much do you like to be by yourself?					
47. To what extent do you feel self-conscious or embarrassed if called upon to recite in class?					
48. How much do you worry over the future?					
49. To what extent did you rebel against discipline in grade school?					
50. How much self-confidence do you ordinarily feel just before going into a contest?					
51. To what extent did you rebel against discipline at home during childhood?					
52. To what extent is it difficult for you to ask questions in class?					
53. How quick are you to condemn people for their failure to live up to your standards?					
54. To what extent are you usually absorbed in your own interests to the exclusion of other people's interests?					
55. To what degree are you sensitive to "remarks" about your personal appearance?					

56. Did you usually rate your abilities much higher than average, higher, average, lower, or much lower than average during the last two years of high school? _____

57. Give the approximate number of intimate friends which you now have at college? _____

58. How old were you when you completed the eighth grade? _____

59. What occupation do you intend to follow? _____

60. Are your feelings easily hurt by criticism? _____

APPENDIX II

OUTLINE FOR WRITING LIFE HISTORY

These questions bear on different types of children and their experiences both in the family and outside. They are designed chiefly as suggestions and aids to help you in writing the story of your life. Please do not answer each question as in an examination but put them into personal story form. Please try to cover all the questions, however. It is important to describe concrete experiences illustrating points in as much detail as possible. The intimate family situation is especially important and should be described as fully and accurately as possible. Be sure to state whether you are an only child, or the youngest, middle, or oldest child. Your information will be strictly confidential.

I

1. When and where were you born? What were your earliest recollections? Did you play much with children of your own age? How did you get along with them? Tell about any imaginary playmates whom you may have had.
2. How many children were there in your family? What was your position in the family as oldest, youngest, middle, or only child? Give the sex and the number of years that each is older or younger than you. Did you think of yourself as a favorite child, or that you were discriminated against in favor of one of your brothers or sisters? Did relatives or friends of the family think of you as a "spoiled" child? Do you now think that your parents or other relatives in the home "spoiled" you?
3. How were you dealt with, as a child and later, by each of your parents? Were you indulged a great deal, treated severely, neglected or dealt with sensibly? Were practically all your wishes immediately satisfied by one or both parents or were you denied many things you wanted? Give concrete instances. Were there other relatives such as grandparents, uncles or aunts who lived with the family at any time? If so, how did they treat you?
4. Were you given a great deal of attention by one or both parents? Did you ever feel that everything revolved about you? Were either or both of your parents especially anxious for your welfare and safety, perhaps not letting you play much with other children or otherwise especially careful with you? If so, give instances, telling how you felt at the time.
5. Was there a very deep love between you and your mother (or father)? If your mother (or father) had a deep love for you,

in what ways was it expressed? How did it affect you? Did it take away any of your freedom to play with other children, to associate with the opposite sex, or to do anything else you liked? How did it affect other persons' attitudes and feelings toward you? Relate instances which would illustrate any of the foregoing points.

6. Describe the personal traits and temperament of your parents. Were there any conflicts or quarrels between them? If so, did they lead to permanent or only temporary antagonism? How did this situation affect you?

II

7. Describe your play experiences at school. Did you play much? What kind of games--active, rough, noisy, group games or less active, quiet, more solitary amusements by yourself or with only one or two favorite playmates? How did you get along with playmates? Did you have any difficulty in adjusting yourself to others' ways or find it difficult to enter freely into group games? Were you selfish with your playthings or envious if others received more attention than you? Did you prefer to play with younger, older, or children of your own age? The opposite sex or your own? Why? Describe your childhood love affairs.
8. Describe your experiences in school (including high school and college) aside from play activities. Which phases of school life did you like best and which did you dislike most? Why? What social activities did you enter into? Was your school work average, below or above? What were your most consuming desires and ambitions during grade and high school years?
9. Describe your role and position among playmates, schoolmates and in other intimate groups. Were you a leader, a superior member, a follower, a hanger on, or an outcast, etc., in each group at different times? What were your nicknames? How did you acquire your position in each group? Illustrate. Were you ever ridiculed or "made fun of"? If so, give instances, relating how you responded.
10. Describe your health as a child and later. Did you have any defects or peculiarities, physical or mental, which caused you to feel out of place or inferior? If so, how did this affect your relations or associations with others? Illustrate.
11. Were you left alone a great deal as a child and youth? If so, describe how you spent most of your time. Did you spend much time in reading, music, or other solitary amusements? What kind of reading did you enjoy most--imaginative works, fairy stories, historical books, romantic, adventurous, practical, or philosophical works?
12. Describe your experiences at social affairs. Did you like to take part in parties, dances, and other social activities? Was it difficult or easy for you to enter freely into them? Do you now feel awkward and embarrassed, not knowing how to take part in such activities? Were you envious of others who received more attention than you at those affairs? Can you

meet people easily and get acquainted fairly quickly? Is it difficult or easy to get the other person's point of view and to sympathize with others in their difficulties? Relate concrete experiences illustrating each of the above points.

III

13. Describe as fully as you can your own traits and temperament. Are you inclined to be aggressive and self-confident or lacking in initiative and self-confidence? Are you prone to be stubborn and rebellious or yielding and obedient; talkative or quiet; frank or evasive; conscientious or careless? Are you frequently subject to moods, easily worried and irritated, or happy-go-lucky and carefree? Are you ordinarily impulsive or slow to act; quick-tempered or even-tempered; domineering or submissive; dreamy and visionary or practical; sympathetic or unsympathetic? As a rule are you prone to be critical or tolerant of others; radical or conservative; suggestible or non-suggestible; changeable or steady? Have any of your friends or relatives thought you inclined to be egotistical, self-centered, boastful, humble, modest, jealous or envious? Do you think you have had or now have any of these last named traits? Relate experiences which might reveal any of your traits of character.
14. Did you daydream very much as a child and later? If so, what were these daydreams about? Answer fully. If your wishes could be granted, what would you like most to do and to be at present? What do you generally think about before going to sleep? Do these thoughts ever take dramatic form or become phantasies? Do you dream during sleep? How much? Describe one of your most vivid dreams or nightmares. Describe one or more of the dreams that you have had over and over.
15. What worries about morals, sex, religion, or other matters have caused you difficulty? Tell about these and how they have affected your life.
16. Have you entered into any experiences deeper than friendship with the opposite sex? If so, describe them.
17. Enumerate carefully the organizations to which you have ever belonged. Include informal groups, bunches or small crowds as well as regular organizations. Have you held or do you now hold offices in any of these?

